

1496
T H E

P R O M I S I N G G O D,

A

P E R F O R M I N G G O D.

A S E R M O N, O N G E N. xxviii. 15.

P R E A C H E D

O N A T H A N K S G I V I N G - D A Y, i m m e d i a t e l y a f t e r
t h e c e l e b r a t i o n o f t h e S a c r a m e n t o f t h e L O R D ' S
S U P P E R, a t A B B O T ' S H A L L, O C T. 22d, 1733.

B y t h e l a t e R e v e r e n d

M r. R A L P H E R S K I N E,

M i n i s t e r o f t h e G o s p e l a t D U N F E R M L I N E.

He is faithful that hath promised. H E B. x. 23.

T H E F I F T H E D I T I O N.

G L A S G O W:

P r i n t e d b y a n d f o r W I L L I A M S M I T H;
A n d S o l d a t h i s S h o p i n t h e F o o t o f t h e S a l t m e r c a t.

10 x

M D C C L X X V I I I.

P. R. O. M. I. S. S. I. N. G. G. O. D.

P. E. R. F. O. R. M. I. N. G. G. O. D.

A S. E. R. M. O. N. O. N. O. F. O. M. A. X. X. I. I. I. I. I.

On a Friday, the day immediately after
the celebration of the Marriage of the Lord's
Supper, 1783.



M. R. A. L. P. H. I. N. S. K. I. N. E.

Minister of the Gospel at the same time.

He is a native of the County of Kent.

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The promising GOD, a performing GOD.

GEN. xxviii. 15.

For I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.

AT the last sacramental solemnity of this sort, I spoke a little upon the great plea and prayer of faith upon the divine promise, in the words of David, 2 Sam. vii. 25.—*Lord; do as thou hast said.* We may now look upon this text that I have read, as the gracious answer of God to that prayer of faith, in the words of the great God himself to Jacob, *I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of; or, till I have done as I have said.*

What God said once to Joshua, chap. i. 5.—*I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee,* is applied, as spoken to all believers, Heb. xiii. 5. *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.* Even so, what God said to Jacob here, doth equally belong to all believers in Christ; *I will not leave thee, till I do that which I have spoken to thee of.* Hath God condescended to speak to you, and caused you to hope upon his word of grace, or promise, at this, or any former occasion? Here is good news to take away with you, that the promising God will, in due time, be a performing God, and that you may not think long, and weary or faint in your mind, apprehending what a weary time it may be between the promise and the performance. Here is supporting encouragement in the mean time, *I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.* What I have said I will do, and will not leave thee till I have done it.

In the preceding part of this chapter, you find Jacob was forced to flee from his father's house upon the

account of the wrath of his brother Esau: he is hastened away to Padanaram; and on his way he comes to Luz, which afterwards, on the account of a notable emergent, was called BETHEL, where God signally appeared and discovered himself to him in great glory, suitably to his strait. Here he was benighted, ver. 11. and was obliged to ly in the open field. Some of the saints and servants of God have been put to great hardships, thro' the violence and rage of their persecuting brethren. But though Jacob's bed was hard, yet his rest was sweet; while he had a hard pillow of stone under his head, the Lord appeared to him in a dream, and spake comfortably to him. God's time of speaking comfort to his people, is readily when they are most destitute of other comforts; then he is most kind, when brethren come to be most unkind.

You may observe two things, first, what God *shewed* to Jacob; and then, what he *said* to him.

1. What he *shewed* to him; he manifested to him his *glory*, as the God of providence, and the God of grace in Christ, who is here represented to him by the ladder reaching from heaven to earth, ver. 12.; and all the intercourse between heaven and earth is by this ladder.

2. What he *spake* to him, ver. 13. *And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set upon earth, and the top of it reaching to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.* As the vision was suitable to his present case, letting him understand that he had a good guide, and a good guard, not only the angel of God, but the Lord of angels; so the words that God spake to him were suitable to his present need. The Lord spake from the top of the ladder; for all the glad tidings we receive from heaven come through Jesus Christ. Here are former promises made to Abraham, and Isaac, his father and grandfather, repeated and ratified to Jacob; whereby God intimated, that he would be the same to him that he had been to them. Here are fresh promises made to him suited to his present condition.

He was to leave his kindred, and to want their presence: God promised to be present with him; *I am with thee.* He was in the fear of Esau: God promised, saying, *I will keep thee.* He was journeying to an unknown place: God promised to *keep him in all places whithersoever he went.* He was apprehensive he would never see his own country again: God promised he would *bring him again to that land.* He seemed to be left of all his friends and relations: God promised, saying, *I will not leave thee.* Providence seemed to cross the promise, while he is thus going as an exile to a place far distant: God assures him of the performance of all he had said, in due season; *I will not leave thee, till I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.* When God speaks to his people, he speaks to the point; he speaks to the case; his words are suited to their present exigencies; and not only so, but to their future straits also. Jacob knew not, but God knew and foresaw what hardships he would meet with in his uncle Laban's service; and in a suitableness to the event that was to take place, he assures him saying, *I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.* This was such a gracious manifestation, and such a wonderful intercourse that God had with Jacob, as obliged Jacob to put a remark upon the place, and call it BETHEL, the *house of God, the gate of heaven.*

The text is not so much a *new* promise, as a repeated confirmation of what he had *before* promised, for establishing and fortifying of Jacob's faith: for says God, *I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.* Where we may observe two things.

1. A *confirming* word concerning the issue; or what he would bring out of these promises, that they shall not be mere sayings, but doings; *I will do what I have spoken to thee of.* Have I said it, and will I not do it? *In the end the vision shall speak.*

2. A *supporting* word in the *interim*, that faith may not faint in the mean time before the accomplishment

come, *I will not leave thee, until I have done it.* Jacob might think, Alas! it may be a long time between the promise now made and the accomplishment of it. What will become of me in the mean time? And, indeed, he had dark days, and hard service before his hand; and there was long, twenty years between the Bethel-visit here, where he met with God, and God spake to him in this manner, and the Peniel visit, when he wrestled with God and prevailed, and when God came to do for him some of the great things he here had spoken to him of. And in that interval of twenty years, between Bethel and Peniel, many vicissitudes and changes, trials and difficulties occurred in Jacob's lot: but for his support in the mean time, God assures him that he would never leave him until he had done that which he had spoken to him of. Hence the doctrine I would speak a little unto is,

OBSERVE. That whatever dark and dismal days may befall the children of God, upon the back of sweet Bethel-visits, that he allows to them; yet he will not leave them, till he hath accomplished all the Bethel-promise that he made to them.

He will never leave them till he do what he hath spoken to them of. He will go on, till he hath done as he hath said. We may say of our Lord Jesus, when once he hath spoken to a soul, and begun to do graciously, as Naomi said to Ruth concerning Boaz, Ruth iii. 18. *Sit still, my daughter, till thou knowest how the matter will fall: for the man will not rest, till he hath finished the thing this day.* Even so, when Christ hath begun to speak kindly, the poor believer may sit still and wait patiently, till the appointed time of accomplishing his word; for the God-man will not rest until he hath finished the thing. We may be confident of this very thing, that he that hath begun the good work in us, and said the good word to us, will perform it, and finish it, Phil. i. 6. *I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.*

We find how this doctrine was verified, both in Jacob, and his seed.

1. In Jacob's own *person*. After this discovery of God that he enjoyed at Bethel, many dark days, and much hard service he endured, yet God did not leave him. When Laban cast down his countenance on him, and said, putting him in mind of his Bethel-visit he made to him, and the Bethel-vow he caused him to make, Gen. xxxi. 13. *I am the God of Bethel.* Yea, God never left him, till he did what he spoke to him, both in prospering him in the place where he was a stranger so long, and in bringing him back to his own land though he was in great danger: When Laban was pursuing him behind, and his brother Esau meeting him in the face, yet God preserved him according to his word, and brings him back to the land he promised to bring him to, and then sends him to visit Bethel, Gen. xxxv. 7. where he built an altar, and called it, *EL-BETHEL*; that is, the *God of Bethel*; and so remarked the goodness of God to him, in not leaving him till he had *done all that he spoke to him of*.

2. In Jacob's *seed* this doctrine was verified, particularly with reference to the promise made to them, concerning their inheriting the land of Canaan, and expelling the Canaanites to make room for them. See and compare Josh. xxi. 43, — 45. with Josh. xxiii. 14, 15. and 1 Kings viii. 56. God will take his own time of doing what he hath spoken; but he will be sure to do it, whatever difficulties intervene between the promise and performance.

In handling of this subject, I would incline to observe the following method, through divine assistance.

- I. Shew what we are to understand by the *Bethel-visits*, that God may allow his people.
- II. Point out some of the *dark days* that may follow upon these Bethel interviews.
- III. Consider and explain the *promise* here made, that he *will not leave them, till he hath done that*

which he hath spoken to them of, notwithstanding of the dark days that may intervene between the promise and the accomplishment.

IV. Offer some grounds upon which the believer may be assured, that God will not leave him, till he hath done that which he hath spoken to him of.

V. Deduce some inferences for the application of the whole.

I. The first thing proposed was, To shew what we are to understand by the *Bethel-visits* God may allow his people. In order to this, I premise, it is sure none are acquaint with what we call a *Bethel-visit*, except these that are in a peculiar manner blessed of the Lord, as Jacob was, of whom his father Isaac said, *I have blessed him, and he shall be blessed*, Gen. xxvii. 33. They are the blessed objects of God's love, and the blessed heirs of the promises; brought into covenant with God, and joined to the Lord by converting grace and saving faith. And as none are acquainted with Bethel-visits but these that are thus blessed; so it is with great variety, that the Lord's people do enjoy such appearances of God. Though they have not all experience of Bethel interviews with God, of the same measure and degree with that of Jacob; yet they have such experience of meeting with God as are substantially the same. Whatever difference there may be in circumstances; yet they are such, as they may call the place BETHEL, the *house of God*, the *gate of heaven*.

In the illustration of this point, I shall here observe
1. The substance. 2. The ordinary circumstances of such interviews with God as may be called Bethel-visits.

1st, The *substance*, or substantial part thereof, is God's gracious meeting with them, so as they may have it to say, *The Lord God of the Hebrews met with us*, Exod. iii. 18. And that either in public ordinances, or in secret duties, by night or by day, in the city or

in the field; and this meeting hath these two things especially in it, which we find was in Jacob's meeting with God here in Bethel, the one is the manifestation of his glory, and the other is the communication of his mind

1. This Bethel-visit includes a *manifestation of his glory*. Jacob here sees the glory of God in Christ represented as the ladder reaching between heaven and earth. Why then, you may call that a Bethel wherever it hath pleased God to reveal Christ in you, and to open your eyes to see his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, as the way to the Father, and as the ladder by which you may ascend up to heaven. Have you seen, at this, or any former occasion, Christ to be, as it were, the ladder set upon the earth, in his humiliation, and reaching unto heaven, in his exaltation, and so that all the rounds and steps of the ladder are compleated in his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and sitting at the right-hand of God; and *by him do we believe in God, who raised him from the dead, that our faith and hope might be in God?* 1 Pet. i. 21. And have we thus, by faith, stept up the ladder, or are we on the way stepping up as we can, through grace, upon the view of Christ as the only ladder, the only way? Hath thus the God that *commanded light to shine out of darkness, shined into our hearts*, not our heads only, but our hearts, to give us the *light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ*, so as our hearts have gone out after a revealed Christ? Well, this is one substantial part of a Bethel-visit, the manifestation of his glory.

2. This Bethel-visit includes a *communication of his mind*. Jacob here not only hath God manifesting his glory to him, but also communicating his mind as a promising God, saying, I am your father's God, *The God of Abraham and Isaac*; and in testimony that I will be your God also, I will do so and so to you: and thus he communicates his mind to him by promises of grace. Why then, you may call that a

Bethel-visit, when God comes and intimates his love, or communicates his mind, and speaks into your heart by some word of grace and promise, and opening your understanding to apprehend, and your heart to apply, and causing you to hope in his word, as *Yea* and *Amen* in Christ. If God hath spoken a word to your heart, and made you take him at his word, so as you can look to him and say, *Remember the word on which thou causedst me to hope*, wherever it was, you may say the name of the place was BETHEL, and that you found him in Bethel, and there he spoke to you, Hos. xii 4. Now, concerning these visits, we may remark four things.

(1) That the Lord may allow a Bethel-manifestation and communication to his people, and yet they may not know that God is present with them, in such a manner as he is, till an after reflection thereupon. Hence said Jacob here, ver. 16, when he awaked out of his sleep, *Surely God was in this place, and I knew it not*. God's people may be surprised with his visits, though they cannot but be conscious of his coming, when he approaches to them, yet they may not be sure about the qualities of that visit, whether it was a saving divine manifestation, till they come to examine and reflect upon it, and find that it was none other but the powerful presence of God: for, they carry their own evidence along with them; *Surely, he was here*.

(2.) Bethel-visits fill the soul with a *holy awe of God*, ver. 17. *How dreadful is this place!* They that will see God will see cause of holy trembling and blushing before him, and the sight will humble and fill them with holy awe and reverence. Saving discoveries do not elevate and puff up with pride, but impress the soul with holy dread. The sweet pleasure and joy that attend the discovery is tempered with holy fear and awe, in so much, that they *fear the Lord and his goodness, and rejoice with trembling*. The place where God manifests himself is both a joyful and a dreadful place. Praise is the most joyful and heartsome exer-

cise; yet God is said to be *fearful in praises*, because of the dread and awe of God that is on the heart of these that praise him; for, *Great is the glory of the Lord* which they see who *sing in the ways of the Lord*.

(3.) Divine visits are *not excluded from any place*; even here, where Jacob little thought of meeting with God, here he meets him, he finds him in Bethel, and says, *This is the house of God, and the gate of heaven*. Wherever we are, in the house or in the field, if we meet with God there, we may call it the *house of God*, and the *gate of heaven*; for, heaven is in his gracious presence.

(4.) Divine visits are *quickening*, ver 18. He rises early in the morning, and sets about solemn worship of the God that appeared to him. He sets up the stone for a pillar, and anoints it as a memorial of what past, and gave the place a new name. As the sweet communion we have with God ought to be remembered; so his grant of mercy calls for our return of duty. Jacob is here also quickened to vow himself away to the Lord, and promise to serve him; and, indeed, our vows and promises are then regular and evangelical, when they are the fruit of God's manifesting himself in the covenant of promise to us, as to Jacob here: for whatever we promise, we can perform nothing but in virtue of his promise to us.

2dly, As to the *ordinary circumstances* of such Bethel interviews with God. Several of these may be gathered from the history of Jacob, and will be found to correspond with the believer's experience, as in these following particulars.

1. That in the Lord's ordinary way of dealing, when he deals effectually with poor souls, and when he hath a mind to bring them to a Bethel, he readily brings them to a *wilderness*, and there deals powerfully with them, and *speaks kindly to them*; or, *to their heart*. Thus here Jacob is in the wilderness, being banished from his father's house. Though he was a son of the promise, yet he was forced to run to a strange country.

God allures his people, and brings them to a wilderness, and then speaks comfortably; gives them the *valley of Achor for a door of hope*. Some here readily have come to this communion, or the like, and have found themselves in a wilderness of confusion, darkness, and despondency, and yet had, ere all was done, ground to call the place BETHEL, by reason of God's meeting with them, and speaking kindly to them.

2. The sweetest discoveries of God are readily ushered in with the *darkest nights*. God's visit is ordinarily like the break of the day upon the back of a dark night. And, indeed, *Weeping may endure for a night but joy cometh in the morning*, Psal xxx 5. As it was literally in the dark night that God visited Jacob here; so you will see what a dark night of trouble, distress, and perplexity Jacob was in when he met with God at Peniel, and wrestled with the angel and prevailed; *Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him till the break of day*, Gen. xxxii. 24. He had been before this compassed with clouds of fear on the account of Esau, who was meeting him with four hundred men. You that are in the dark night of fear and distress may be encouraged to wait on, for readily the Lord ushers in manifestations of himself with the darkest nights.

3. As the Lord is pleased to usher in sweet manifestations of himself with a dark night; so readily a *dark night follows* upon their sweet manifestations. And many times they are as a blink before a storm; and the people of God often find this to their sad experience, making them see ground to be sober after their sweet experiences. Jacob had a good night in Bethel; but new straits followed upon it, particularly in the hard service and harsh treatment he met with from Laban. Here is a visit; and presently follows a night of trouble again. We mention this, not for your discouragement, but that you may not be surprised; for, there may be a sudden turn in your spiritual affairs: *I said, my mountain stands strong; but thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled*.

4. Sometimes the night that follows upon the Lord's manifesting himself may be *darker*, and the darkness of it *greater* than the night they had before their Bethel-manifestation. Jacob was in a strait before the Bethel-visit, through the fear of Esau; but after that kindly visit, the strait was greater, and the night darker, while he had not only the fear, but the feeling of Laban's displeasure: perhaps you had a dark night before the Lord paid you a visit; but what if a darker night shall follow upon that visit, even some grievous temptation to raze all again. The church was brought to *the banqueting-house, and his banner over her was love*; yet afterwards to the dark shadow, where she cries, *I sought him, but I found him not*. What a sweet communion had the disciples with Christ at the last supper! yet followed with the darkest night of temptation, trouble, and scattering: the Shepherd of Israel himself being smitten, the sheep were scattered. When the Lord allows you sweet Bethel-interviews and blessings, you may mistake them, and think they presage nothing, but a life of joy and comfort henceforth, and that former trials are at an end; and yet they may be only preparations for approaching trials, and encouragements to faith and hope under future troubles. This leads me,

II. To the *second* thing proposed, which was to shew, what *dark* and *dismal days* may follow upon these Bethel-discoveries. There are these following dark days or rather dark nights, that may follow upon Bethel-visits.

1. A dark night of *long absence*, a night of *weary desertion* may follow. Jacob had not, for twenty years, such a night as he had at Bethel: there may be long twenty years travel between Bethel and Peniel. Perhaps you had much heavenly-warmness by a live coal from the altar, when God manifested himself, and you got a heart to close with Christ. The place was like a heaven upon earth to you; but, perhaps, many a weary day you have had since that time. May be you have

never had such a gale since that time. Or, if this communion hath been a Bethel to you, think it not strange though a night of absence and hiding may follow, and though the night be long.

2. A dark night of *forgetfulness* may follow upon the Bethel-visit, so as it is hard to know how secure people may grow; and they may lose the sweet impression of the visit, and have little or no kindly remembrance of the sweet days they had at Bethel. This dark night followed upon Jacob's meeting with God here; it seems he had much forgotten it, till God puts him in mind of it, saying, Gen. xxxi. 13. *I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and vowedst the vow.* Jacob, might he say, do you not mind the time? do you not mind the place? do you not mind the two pillars? do you not mind the promise? do you not mind the Bethel, where I shewed my covenant to thee, and accepted thy vows unto me? Be not discouraged with the fear of Laban behind pursuing you, and Esau before meeting you; it is enough to drive all fears and discouragements away, that *I am the God of Bethel*; I am the same God now, that I was at that day to you: however, Jacob had lost the sweet impression, and lost the kind remembrance of Bethel, till God himself was the remembrancer. In the dark night of oblivion, all may go out of sight, and out of mind.

3. A dark night of *temptations, fears, and discouragements* may follow upon a sweet Bethel visit. The gracious encouragement that God gave to Jacob afterwards, shews what fears and discouragements he was under, and under which he was ready to sink, if God had not supported and comforted him from time to time. Well, even after a Bethel-visit you may be grievously tempted, to call all that you met with but a delusion; yea, to think that it was Satan that was working with you, and not the living God; and to think that your coming to a communion table was but a taking a seal of your own condemnation. Some may

be tempted to fear that God hath a controversy with them. that does not observe their affliction. It seems this was a part of the dark night that came upon Jacob; and therefore God shews him that it was an ungrounded jealousy; *For, says he, I have seen all that Laban hath done to thee*, Gen. xxxi. 12. Though thou wast not sensible of my care, yet I have all this time had a special care about thee, and increased thy stock, notwithstanding of what Laban did. It is hard to believe the divine care in a dark day, wherein we apprehend his displeasure; and yet when he returns, he can make us see he had a special care of us, when we know not of it; and that he hath been doing all things well, even when we were fearing all these things were against us.

4. A dark night of *wants* and *straits* may follow upon Bethel-visits; both outward and inward wants: temporal wants, such as Jacob mentions, when he complained that Laban had *changed his wages ten times*, Gen. xxxi. 41. Spiritual wants, and want of comfort such as Jacob was under, when in his strait he could draw no comfort, even from an old Bethel, till God gave him a new visit, by telling him, that he was the God of Bethel. Think not strange, though, upon the back of Bethel-visits, you be trysted with great straits, outward and inward, and perhaps can draw no comfort from a back-look upon Bethel; for, whenever you can draw comfort and encouragement from it, you may reckon it a new visit; when, in a dark day, you can remember him from the *land of Jordan*, and remember what God did to you at such a time.

5. A dark night of *persecution*, even by friends and brethren, may follow upon Bethel-visits, as Jacob found after this visit, when persecuted by Laban, his father-in-law, and Esau his brother, that was conceived in the same womb with him, though God mercifully restrained their anger and fury, that they got not their will of Jacob; *For, the wrath of man shall praise God, and the remainder thereof he will restrain*. Think not strange then, even from Bethel-meetings

with God, though you should be tried with a dark night of Persecution, even from envious friends and false brethren. The church and spouse of Christ speaks of a Bethel, Song i. 4. *The king hath brought me into his chambers, we will be glad and rejoice in thee;* and yet a hot and scorching persecution followed, ver. 6. *The sun hath looked upon me.* Why? *My mother's children were angry with me.* There is hardly any persecution more grievous and violent, than that of angry brethren; but they are under a restraint; they can go no further than God permits: only we need not think strange to see church-persecutions, even after Bethel-visits.

6. A dark night of *backsliding* and *relapse* to former unwatchfulness, security, and sloth may follow upon the Bethel-visit, though it was solemnly renounced at Bethel. Jacob seems to have been under a lamentable decay, as to the exercise of faith that once he had at Bethel, till once God returned and quickened him again. Christ said to his disciples after the communion, *Ye shall all be offended, because of me this night: you shall all turn your backs upon me: you may lamentably relapse to these sins that were renounced.* I know not your particular case; but whatever it is, it hath been the sad experience of God's remnant. You may relapse to the omission of known duty; yea, to the embracement of known idols, the very thing that parted between God and you. This is a sad and sorrowful night, that you need to take care you bring not upon yourselves through unwatchfulness, in so provoking the Lord to anger with you, as he was with Solomon, 1 Kings xi. 9. It is said the *Lord was angry with him, because his heart turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared to him twice.* What a sad matter is it, if after a Bethel-interview with God you turn your back upon the God of Bethel! *Will you also go away?*

7. A dark night of *strange dispensations* may follow upon Bethel-interviews. Various trials, vicissitudes,

and changes such as was in Jacob's lot, between the time of Bethel promises and Peniel performances thereof; Jacob did not want chastisements; *If his children break my law, I will visit their transgressions with rods, and their iniquities with stripes; nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail*, Psal. lxxxix 30,—33. God may cover your table at Bethel, but behold afterwards the ordinary means of relief may fail you, as it was with Jacob in Laban's family; even so, the means of spiritual relief may fail you. You may go to preachings, and return as dark as before. You may go to your closet, and that mean may fail you. You may go to public ordinances and sacraments, and these means may fail you. Though at Bethel you, perhaps, thought, Oh! I will never be what I have been; I will never do as I have done: I will never doubt nor fear any more: yet all this may be out of sight, and *the Comforter that should relieve your soul, may be far from you*, Lam. i. 19. Strange dispensations may befall you. *All God's waves and billows may pass over you, and deeps call unto deeps*, Psal. xlii. 7.

8. A dark night of *perplexities* amidst these strange dispensations may follow upon Bethel-interviews. Thus it was with Jacob before he came off from Laban's house, he knew not what to do till the Lord directed him to *arise and turn to the land of his kindred*, Gen. xxxi. 13. You may come to such a night of perplexities that you know not what to do, or what hand to turn you to. You may come to look upon yourself as in a perishing condition, and to say *your strength and hope is perished from the Lord. Remembring your affliction and misery, the worm-wood and the gall*, Lam. iii. 18, 19. What shall I say? May we not observe, with fear and trembling, that some who have met with God have afterwards come under dreadful dark clouds, both in point of *sin and misery*?—Some have been so far left to *sin* after manifestations, as deservedly to be called devils: Peter got such a discovery of God in

Christ, that the Lord says to him, *Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonas: flesh and blood hath not revealed these things to thee, but my Father which is in heaven.* Yet instantly Peter is left so far to sin, that Christ says to him, *Get thee behind me, Satan: thou savourest not the things that be of God.* Matth. xvi. 17, 23. And what think you of his denying his master with curses? Let us not imagine they are all strangers to Bethel-interviews with God that deny, or do not zealously own the cause and interest of Christ at this day. But let us fear and tremble to consider how far the children of God may be left to depart from him and his way, in a dark time, and in a day of temptation. It is possible that good men may be left to sin, and to justify their sin. I will be loth to say, that they are all wicked men that justify their sinful proceedings in public matters at this day, and that justify their persecuting rage and anger at their brethren, when I consider how Jonah justified his anger against God, saying, *I do well to be angry.* So, it is possible, that even some, that have met with God, may justify their anger at their brethren, saying, *We do well to be angry even unto death,* and angry even to suspension, deposition, excommunication †. I hope none need be offended, if I have charity for some that are of that opinion, through their ignorant zeal, while carried away like, Barnabas, with the dissimulations of the day, and whose eyes God will open in due time, to see that their anger was as ill founded as that of Jonah's. For, if ever God met with them at Bethel, when he is pleased to return, their eyes will readily be opened, and they will see they did ill to be angry with their brethren that were contending for the rights of their mother's house: yea, another merciful turn upon their hearts will make them say, as Jacob's sons once did of Joseph, *We are verily guilty concerning our brother.* So we hope of some, it ever

† Our author is here alluding to the conduct of the church-judicatories, in the prosecution, at this time, carrying on against the reverend Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, and his brethren.

they have met God at Bethel, surely upon the Lord's return they will regret their miscarriage, and say, *We have verily been guilty concerning our brother.*—However, as some that have met with God may come under dreadful clouds of *sin*; (for we are not to unfaint them all, and every one that are carried down the stream of defection; though we are to have no charity for their ways, yet let us not meddle with their state, till we see if God shall reclaim them) so, in point of *miser*y, some that have met with God may be put to say, Oh! he breaks me with breach upon breach, and runs upon me like a giant; yea, while *suffering his terrors*, they have in a manner been *distracted*, and sometimes *curst the day wherein they were born.*—Thus you may see what dark days may follow upon Bethel-interviews with God; and yet, after all, the promise stands good to all the seed of Jacob that have met with God at Bethel. He will not leave them, till he hath done that which he hath spoken to them of.

III. The *third* general head proposed was, To consider and explain this promise, *I will not leave thee, till I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.* For explaining hereof, there are these following questions that we would propound and answer. 1. How God speaks to his people? 2. How he doth or accomplisheth that which he hath spoken to them of? 3. When is it that he will do that which he hath promised? 4. What is the import of this privilege, that he will not leave them? 6. In what sense it is said, he will not leave them, till he hath done that which he hath promised?

1st. How God speaks to his people, when they have a Bethel-visit of him? I answer, in a few words,

1. He speaks *divinely*, he speaks like himself, letting them know that it is he that speaks: as he said to the woman of Samaria, John iv. 26. *I that speak unto thee, am he*; so says he here to Jacob, *It is I that speaks to thee; I will not leave thee, until I have done that which*

I have spoken. Never man spake like this man: man's speaking only reaches the ear, but God's speaking reaches and touches the heart. Hence,

2. He speaks *powerfully*, as it is said of Christ, *He spake as one having authority, and not as the scribes*: so, when the Lord speaks, there is power and authority accompanying the word, either in its first coming, or in its after-working, upon the heart. *Ye received the word, not as the word of man, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which worketh effectually in you that believe,* 1 Thess. ii. 13.

3. He speaks *particularly*, as here to Jacob, *I will not leave THEE, till I have done that which I have spoken of to THEE.* People may hear the word delivered in general to all the congregation; but it doth them no good, till they hear it in particular spoken to them. Then God calls the person by name, and says, *To thee I speak*; and the heart says, *It is to me that God is speaking.* O! hath God spoken to thee, man; to thee, woman?

4. He speaks *kindly and comfortably*; *Mos. ii. 14. I will allure her, and bring her to the wilderness; and then speak comfortably to her.* His kindness in speaking appears most evidently when it is in a wilderness case he communicates himself: every word he speaks to Jacob here, is a word of kindness. O the light, life, strength, and comfort that the word brings when God speaks it! He hath a view both to their present comfort and their future support, when he speaks with them in Bethel.

5. He speaks *plainly*, and not in parables: for he opens their understandings to apprehend, and their hearts to apply; *For to them it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; to others it is not given,* Mat. xiii. 11. The word of grace is a sealed book, till the Lion of the tribe of Judah open the seal.

6. He speaks *suitably* to their case; for, he hath *the tongue of the learned, to speake a word in season to the weary,* Isa. l. 4. He adapts his words here to Jacob's

weary case, as I shewed in the explication. He gives them a word that suits their difficulties. Sometimes they have difficulty about this, and sometimes about that and the other affair, and they come with their burdens before the Lord, and he presents a word to them relative to them.—Sometimes they are burdened about their *provision*; and he gives a word for that: *Bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure.*—They are burdened with *fears of danger*; and they get a word for that: *Fear not, for I am with thee: The eternal God is thy refuge.*—Sometimes they want *direction*; and get a word for that; *I will bring the blind by a way that they know not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight.*—They want the *Spirit*; and they get a word for that: *I will put my Spirit within you; and the water that I give shall be in you a well of water springing up to everlasting life.*—They want *strength* for duty or trial; and they get a word for that: *My grace shall be sufficient for thee, and my strength shall be made perfect in thy weakness.*—They want *pardon*; and they get a word for that: *I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.*—They want to have *sin subdued and mortified*; and get a word for that: *Sin shall not have dominion over you.*—They want something for the *church*; and they get a word for that: *That the wall shall be built in perilous times; that at evening time it shall be light; and upon all the glory there shall be a defence.*—They want a *blessing for their children*; and they get a word for that: *I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed.*

2dly, The next question here, was, *How he doth what he hath spoken to them? I will do what I have spoken of to thee.* Why,

1. He will do it *faithfully*: *Not a word shall fail of what he hath spoken,* Josh. xxi. 45. The history of Jacob shews how faithfully God accomplished his promise, and all that he spoke to him; and he hath faithful-

ness for the girdle of his loins. God is not man, that he should lye, nor the son of man that he should repent. He will do what he hath spoken, surely, and certainly; The vision shall speak, it shall surely come.

2. As he will do certainly what he hath spoken, so he will do it *wonderfully*, and he will work wonders before he do it not; *Heaven and earth shall pass away, before one jot of his word fall to the ground.* And it is in a very marvellous and mysterious way, that God doth accomplish his word through a world of dark dispensations, *through fire and water he brings them to a wealthy land.* Though impassable mountains be in the way; yet he will come and do what he hath said, and give his people occasion to say when he comes, *It is the voice of my Beloved, behold he cometh, skipping upon the mountains, leaping upon the hills.*

3. He will do what he hath spoken, and do it *remarkably*. Thus he did what he said to Jacob; and if the believer may put a remark upon the Bethel-visit, when he comes to promise; much more upon the Peniel-visit, when he comes to perform what he hath promised. In the Bethel visit, we see him by faith in his word; but in the Peniel visit, we see him by sense in his work: for then he not only *says* but *does* what he hath said, and shews himself *face to face*.

4. When he doth what he hath spoken, he doth it *surprisingly*. Jacob was not expecting such a way of God's accomplishing his word. Psal. cxxxvi. 1 *When the Lord turned back the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.* He sweetly surprizes when he comes to do what he hath spoken: *Then was our mouths filled with laughter, and our tongues with songs: The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad.* Again,

5. When he doth what he hath spoken, he doth it *gloriously*. His glory shines in all his works, and especially in accomplishing his promises, *that are Yea and Amen in Christ* He makes the glory of his wisdom, power, holiness, the glory of his mercy, truth, and faithfulness to shine in the accomplishment; he doth

more than he hath spoken, and is better than his word, *Exod. xv. 1.* When God accomplished his promise of delivering Israel out of Egypt, and out of the hand of Pharaoh and his host, then their voice was lifted up, saying, *I will sing unto the Lord; for he hath triumphed gloriously.*

6. When he doth what he hath spoken, he doth it *seasonably*; *The vision is for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lye: though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry,* *Hab. ii. 3.* It will not tarry beyond the appointed time, nor beyond the proper time; and therefore, let faith wait upon a faithful God, who will do as he hath said. This leads,

3dly, To the third question, *When is it that he will do what he hath spoken to them of?* You may take the answer, of this in the following particulars.

1. Some things he hath spoken relate to a day of *trouble*; and when that day comes he will do what he hath spoken to them of; *I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him,* *Psal. xci. 15.* Hence his people never enjoy more of his presence and pity, than in days of tribulation and affliction. And sometimes he lets the trouble come to an extremity, before he sensibly accomplish his promise of help; *I was brought low, and he helped me,* *Psal. cxvi. 6.*

2. Some things that he hath spoken to them of relate to a day of *temptation*: and when that comes, then he will do what he hath spoken. He hath said, *Rom. xvi. 20.* *The God of peace will bruise Satan under your feet shortly.* He hath said, *1 Cor. x. 13.* *That he is faithful, and will not suffer them to be tempted above what they are able to bear; but with the temptation will make a way to escape.* And hence it is, for ordinary, in a time of great and grievous temptation, he opens some door by which they escape from time to time, while they wait upon him.

3. Some things that he hath spoken relate to, a day of *work*, of great work that he puts into their hand;

and when that day comes, he doth that which he hath spoken. He hath said, *That he works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure*, Phil. ii. 13. He hath said, that he will strengthen, he will uphold with the right hand of his righteousness, Isa. xli. 10. And hence it is, that his people can sometimes say with Paul, *I can do all things through Christ strengthening me. Tho' we are not sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves, yet our sufficiency is of God.* And hence the church, Isa. xxvi. 12. *Thou hast wrought all our works in us.* And David, Psal. lvii. 2. *I will cry unto God most High, unto God that performeth all things for me.*

4. Some things that he hath spoken of relate to a day of warfare: and when that day of bloody battle comes, he doth what he hath spoken. He hath said concerning this, even he *who is the Captain of salvation*; the Lord mighty in battle hath said, for the encouragement of his soldiers, *Who go a warfare upon their own charges?* 1 Cor. ix. 7. *He is the strength of their salvation, that covers their heads in the day of battle*, Psal. cxl. 7. And hence it is, that according to his word, his people are said *always to triumph in Christ Jesus*, and to be *more than conquerors*. See Psal. xviii. 30, 32. 34. *The word of the Lord is tried: He is a buckler to all those that trust in him. It is God that girdeth me with strength: He teacheth my hands to war: and bows of steel are broken by mine arms.* All their ability to stand in a day of trial and danger flows from this.

5. Some things he hath spoken of relate to the day of death: and when that comes he, will do what he hath spoken to them. He hath said, *Death shall be swallowed up in victory*, 1 Cor. xv. 54. He hath said, Hos. xiii. 14. *I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death! I will be thy plagues; O grave! I will destruction.* And hence it is, that as all believers in Christ are blessed in death; for, *Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, and that sleep in Jesus*; so, some believers have got the sensible and comfortable view of this, even passing

through that valley between time and eternity, and have fallen a singing in the midst of the valley, and saying, *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.* With the staff of the promise in their hand, they walk thro' Jordan dry shod. And when the soul is separated from the body, then it enters into the *rest that remains for the people of God*, according to that which he hath spoken.

6. Some things that he hath spoken relate to a day of judgement; and when that day comes, that then he *will do what he hath spoken to them of.* He hath said four times in one chapter; namely, John vi. *That he will raise them up at the last day; and 1 Thess. iv. 13. That if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, upon the same ground, and with the same certainty, them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him; and that the dead in Christ will rise first, and meet the Lord in the air; and so shall they be ever with the Lord.* He hath said, 1 Cor. xv. 52. *That in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the sound of the last trumpet, the dead shall be raised incorruptible: That this corruptible shall put on incorruption, this mortal shall put on immortality.* He hath said, Col. iii. 4. *When he who is our life shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory.* He hath said, Phil. iii. 21. *That he will change our vile bodies, and make them like his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.* He hath said, *That the saints shall enter into the joy of their Lord, and shall judge the world.*

What I have said, may give some light to the question, *When will he do what he hath spoken to his people?* He will do all that he hath spoken, partly here, and perfectly hereafter. He hath promised eternal life to the believer: *He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life.* This he doth in part here, and to perfec-

tion hereafter; and we may appeal to every believer of any standing, if the promise of heaven and glory be not, even in part, allowed him here by a personal possession. He is possessed of heaven; not only,

(1.) By *union* to Christ, so as his head is in heaven, Christ the Fore-runner having taken possession, and *gone to prepare the place for him*; so that he *sits with him in heavenly places*; but also,

(2.) By *communion* he hath some personal possession, if you consider what heaven is.—Is heaven a state of *light*, perfect light? The believer hath the begun possession of this, in so far as *he hath the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face Jesus Christ*.—Is heaven a state of *liberty*, perfect liberty? The believer hath the begun possession of this, in so far as at any time his *bonds are loosed, and the Spirit of God is poured out upon him*; *where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty*.—Is heaven a state of *love*, perfect love? The believer hath the begun possession of this, in so far as *the love of God is shed abroad upon your heart, by the Holy Ghost*; and *the love of God constraineth him to duty or service*.—Is heaven a state of perfect *holiness*? The believer hath the begun possession of this, in so far as *he is sanctified in Christ Jesus, and going on to perfection*; yea, is already perfectly holy in desire.—Is heaven a state of perfect *joy*? The believer hath this also in begun possession, when he is *filled with joy and peace in believing*; yea, sometimes *with joy unspeakable and full of glory*.—Is heaven a state of *triumph and victory*? The believer hath the begun possession of this, when he boasts in the Lord and says, *Thanks be to God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ*.—Is heaven a place of *praise and wonder* at the grace of God, and the glorious perfections of God? The believer hath the begun possession of this also, when sometimes his heart is filled with the high praise of God, filled with wonder at his matchless love and distinguishing grace. He would invite all the world to wonder and praise. Yet, O what a small portion of heaven hath he here, in comparison of what he shall have! *He shall drink of the river of pleasure*

for ever. Yet that part he enjoys here, is the earnest of the full possession, and the evidence that he will do all that he hath spoken to them of, concerning grace and glory, and every good thing.

4thly, The next question was, What is the import of this privilege, *I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of*? Why, how can it be said he will not leave them; when yet, after Bethel-visits and Bethel-promises given them, they may be trysted with. For clearing this subject, there are these two remarks I would offer.

1. The first remark is, "That there are *some respects* wherein God may be said to leave people;" as.

(1.) When he takes away his word, his candlestick, his ordinances, and brings a famine, *not of bread and water, but of the word of the Lord*, Amos viii. 11, 12. this is the worst famine in the world.

(2.) When he takes away his Spirit, and commands the clouds to rain no rain, Isa. v. 6. This is a fearful leaving; for, though the word and ordinances remain, yet, if the Spirit be away, then the word can do no good, it hath no power to convince or convert, to confirm or comfort.

(3.) When he takes away his ear, and doth not regard their prayers; when he doth not suffer them to pray, nor answer their prayer, but shuts them out, Lam. iii. 8.

(4.) When he takes away his hand, his help and assistance, and leaves persons to themselves, to their own lusts and counsels; *My people would not hearken, Israel would have none of me: therefore I gave them up to their own lusts; and they walked after their own counsels*, Psal. lxxxi. 11. Alas! a sad leaving! But then,

2. The second remark I offer is, "That there are *some respects* wherein God will not leave his people." Either,

(1.) He will never leave them *really*, but in *appearance*. And hence they many times think, and fear he is away,

when he is really present ; *Verily God was in this place, and I knew it not*, says Jacob. Or,

(2.) He never leaves them *absolutely*, but in some respect : he may leave them in respect of the *influence* of grace, though he doth not leave them as to the *presence* of grace. He may leave them in respect of *comfort* ; though he may allow the influences of grace. He may leave them in respect of *assistance* ; though he may allow them the comfort of grace, yet he may deny them that assistance and strength they want, and also the sensible answer of their prayers. Or,

(3.) He never leaves them *totally*, but in some degree. He may leave them to be buffeted by Satan ; but will not leave them to be overcome by Satan. And he may leave them to be harassed and captivated by strong corruptions ; tho' he doth not leave them to be conquered thereby. Or,

(4.) He never leaves them *finally*, but for some time : he may *hide his face for a little moment*, but with *everlasting kindness will he have mercy on them*, Isa. liv. 7, 8. He will never leave them, so as to forget to do what he hath spoken to them of.

This promise then, *I will never leave thee*, it says, that *something* of God is ever with them. They have in them *a well of water springing up to everlasting life*, John iv. 14. God loves to stay where once he comes, *I will not leave thee*.—It says also, that he will not *stay* away : though he hides himself out of sight, that he will not be long away.—It says that in whatever respect he may be said to leave them for a while, yet he will *return* to their joy ; *Now you have sorrow ; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you*, John xvi. 22.—It says that there are some things God will never *deprive* them of, never take away from them. He will never take away his love and favour ; *For he hath loved them with an everlasting love*. He will never take away the covenant of peace and of promise from them ; *The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed ; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be re-*

moved, Isa. liv. 10. *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*, Heb. xiii. 5.

5thly, The next question is, in what *sense* it is said of Jacob, and of all the spiritual seed of Jacob, that God *will not leave them, until he hath done that which he hath spoken to them of*? To explain this a little further, I shall shew, 1. In what sense we are to understand this *interim*-promise, *I will not leave thee*. 2. In what sense we are to understand this particle *until*, which seems to point at a period of this promise.

[1.] In what sense are we to understand this *interim*-promise, *I will not leave thee*? Why, whatever way he may be said to leave his people, yet,

1. He will never leave them *Godless*, but will still be their God; for, his covenant with them is, *I will be their God*: they can never be so far left, but that God is still their God, and they may still go to him as their God.

2. He will never leave them *Christless*: he hath given Christ, *the unspeakable gift of God*, to them; and he will never recall that gift; *For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance*: they shall still have *Christ in them the hope of glory*. Hence,

3. He will never leave them *Spiritless*: he hath given his Spirit to you who are believers; and this anointing which you have received of him abides in you; *I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever*, John xiv. 16. The Spirit may be hid in the believer, but never absent.

4. Hence he will never leave them *comfortless*; John xiv. 18. *I will not leave you comfortless; I will come unto you*. However the *streams* of their comforts may be abated, yet the *spring* of comfort still remains; and hence the well of consolation now and then springs up.

5. He will never leave them *helpless*, but still be to them *a present help in time of trouble*: even when they have destroyed themselves, yet in him is their help. He helps their infirmities when they can-

not pray. He helps them up when they are down. He helps them foreward when behind.

6. He will not leave them *hopeless*, even when they are saying, *My hope is perished from the Lord*; yet he opens to them a door of hope in the valley of Achor. They are never again *without God, and without hope in the world*. Their hope lives. Yea,

7. He will not leave them *faithless*: For he hath prayed for them, that their faith fail not. Their faith may indeed languish, and be like to give up the ghost, as that of the disciples, when they said, *We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel*: but now we doubt of this fundamental article of our creed. But when their faith was just at the failing, the Lord Jesus restored and revived it.

8. He will not leave them *friendless* and *fatherless*: and he is a friend that sticks closer than a brother; and as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them; as a father chastises his children, so the Lord chastiseth them; as a father provideth for his children, so the Lord provideth for them, that they may not be at total want, between the promise and the time of the performance.— Thus he will not leave them until hath done that which he hath spoken to them of. He will not leave dealing with them; he will not leave blessing of them; he will not leave guiding of them and guarding of them; he will not leave making all things working together for good to them, and working for the accomplishing of his promise.

[2.] In what sense we are to understand this particle, *until*, which seems to point at a period of this interim promise. Surely the meaning is not, that when he hath done that which he hath spoken to them of, then he will leave them; but rather that then they will no more need such an encouraging word as this, *I will never leave thee*: for then they will be free of all fear of his leaving them. But the word imports,

1. That there may be a *considerable time* between the promise and the accomplishment; between the time of God's speaking to them, and the time of his doing what

he hath spoken. There was twenty years distance between these two in Jacob's case.

2. It imports, that in this interval God is *carrying on* his work? *I will not leave thee, until I have done it.* Saying and doing is all one to God; he speaks the word, and it is done: and when he hath spoken the word, it is always a-doing, till he hath done it completely.

3. It imports, that though he be still carrying on his work, yet it may *be hid from our eyes*, what way he is doing it; and though we may suspect, on this account, that God hath left us and left his work, when we do not see him with us, nor see what he is doing; yet he is not away when he is delaying the accomplishing of his word, to our sense and feeling, but only taking his own time and his own way, *whose ways are infinitely higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts.*

4. It imports, that this interval of time, wherein God is carrying on his work, though in a way hid from our eyes, is the *time of faith*, wherein we are called to wait upon a promising God, believing that not only he will be a performing God in due time, to our sensible feeling and experience; but that he is a performing God at present, making all interveening providences so many steps towards the accomplishment of his word, though, to carnal sense and reason, they may seem to be so many lets and impediments to hinder the accomplishment thereof. Joseph had it revealed to him once and again, that he would be Lord over his brethren, and that all the family should yield obeysance to him. How was this accomplished? Why, he is thrown into a pit; he is sold into Egypt for a slave; and afterwards he is cast into a prison: these seemed all so many lets and obstructions, in the way of such advancement. How could faith keep its ground here? unless it would shut its eye upon providences, and opens its eye upon the promise, and keep it fixed upon a promising God, and then it would see all these seeming lets to be so many steps towards the accomplishment of the promise, *I will not leave thee, till I*

have done what I have spoken: therefore, let faith see and believe, that I am still carrying on my work, and doing what I promised, whatever secret hidden ways I take to bring about my counsel; I am still doing, and will not leave thee till I have done what I have spoken to thee of.

IV. The fourth general head proposed was, To offer some grounds of the doctrine, upon which the believer may be assured, that God *will not leave him till he hath done that which he hath spoken to him of*, and that he will be all that he hath promised to him at Bethel.

1. Believers may be assured of it, upon the ground of the *unchangeableness* of God. There may be many vicissitudes and changes in thy case: it is only the communion-day above that shall have no more night. Thou wilt certainly change, and change ere it be long: but darest thou say, God will change as oft as thou dost? Thinkest thou that he will change in his love, when thou changeest in thy frame? No; he will rest in his love, *Whom he loves he loves to the end*. Thy security stands upon God's immutability; *I am the Lord, I change not; therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed*, Mal. iii. 6.

2. Believers may be assured, that God will not leave them, *till he hath done what he hath spoken*; and assured upon the ground of God's foreknowledge. What makes men many times alter their sentiments is, because there are many things fall out contrary to what they projected; but God foresaw what would be; he foresaw, that even after a Bethel heart-burning interview with God, thou wouldst grow lukewarm and indifferent; yet notwithstanding of this, he met with you in Bethel, and spake with you there; and therefore he *will do what he hath spoken to thee*. He foresaw what a prodigal, what a backslider you would be, yet gave his word to you; and therefore he will not go back.

3. You may be assured he *will not leave you*, believer, *till he hath done what he hath spoken*; because he is faithful: Heb. x. 23. 1 Thess. v. 23. Faithful is he that hath

promised, who also will do it. Though, when his children break his law, and keep not his commandments, then will he visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquities with stripes: nevertheless his loving kindness will be not utterly take from him, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail. Once hath he sworn by his holiness, that he will not lye unto David, Psal. lxxxix. 30,—35. God is faithful who hath called you to the fellowship of his Son.

4. Believers may be assured of this upon the ground of the divine power; or, because God is *Almighty*, and able to do what he hath spoken. The apostle says, Rom. xi. 23. *The Jews shall be grafted in. Why? For God is able to graft them in again, having once promised it, and said that he will do it. It is enough to support our faith, that he is able to do what he hath said. Abraham's faith leaned upon the power of God, Rom. iv. 21. He was fully persuaded, that he that had promised was able to perform. You may then be assured, believer, that he will never leave you, till he hath done what he hath spoken; unless you can suppose, that he hath out-promised his own power, and said more than he is able to do.*

5. It is evident he will not leave you till he hath done what he hath spoken, if you consider the experience of his people, and your own experience. The experience of God's people, from the beginning of the world, who have always found God to be as good as his word, and the same God, that he manifested himself to be at their Bethel-meeting with him. They have still found him to be the God of Bethel, whatever jealousies they entertained of his love; yet, upon their return, after their dark days were over, they found that his word *endureth for ever*, and that he never came short of his promise; but that notwithstanding all their temptations, they were continually with him, holding them by his right-hand, Psal. lxxiii. 23. They still found him welcoming the returning prodigal, saying, *This my son was dead, and is alive; was lost, and is found.*

Now, is it consistent with their experience? And will he take a singular way with you? Yea, thou darcest not deny, believer, but thou hast found God to be still the God of Bethel, even though many times you were fearing that God would never smile upon you again; yet, upon your looking back to his holy temple, you have been made to say, *O he is the same, and his love is not altered nor changed; and that he hath not forgotten his promise.* Hence, how many times have believers reason to set to their seal to David's exercise and experience, Psal. xxx. 9, 10, 11. When he is crying, *What profit is there in my blood, if I shall go down to the pit?* They fell a praying, *Hear, Lord, and have mercy upon me; Lord, be thou my helper;* and then have been made to say, *Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing, thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness.* May not then experience assure you, that *he will not leave you till he hath done that which he hath spoken.*

6. The everlasting nature of the covenant of promise may assure you of this; *Though my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things and sure,* 2 Sam. xxiii.

5. The bargain was not left to your making a covenant with him, but God himself made it with you; and therefore you shall be kept by his power, *through faith unto salvation.* Though thou shouldst change an hundred times, God will not change one word of the sweet bargain he made with you: because,

7. It is his bargain made with Christ; *I have made a Covenant with my Chosen; and my covenant shall stand fast with him,* Psal. lxxxiv. 3. And hence, *If his children break my law, I will visit their iniquity with rods: nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not take from him,* ver. 30, 33. And because I will not take it from him, I will not take it from them. Your assurance then of his not leaving you, till he hath done what he hath spoken, may stand upon the everlasting love that he hath to Christ, and the standing bargain between Christ and him. He can-

not fail you, because he cannot fail his Son Christ, who hath sealed the covenant with his blood, and in whom therefore *all the promises are Yea and Amen, to the glory of God*: and so the glory of God in Christ, the glory of his mercy and truth in Christ, obliges him to do as he hath spoken.

8. There is one ground of assurance more that I offer, as it lies in the bosom of the text, namely, the *divine will and pleasure*: *I WILL not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken. I WILL NOT*; it is my will and pleasure not to leave you till all be done. You have a word, 1 Sam. xii. 22. *The Lord will not forsake his people, for his great name's sake*: Why? *Because, it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people.* Thus it is said, Deut. vii. 7, 8. *The Lord set his love upon Israel; Why? Because he loved them*: he will because he will. *And who hath resisted his will?* His will is uncontrollable: and hath he manifested his will in this, that *he will not leave you, till he hath done what he hath said?* Then you may be assured of it, for he will do all his pleasure; and well may you say, *Thy will be done.* The covenant of grace is made up of *I wills*, Ezek. xxxvi. 25. and downwards: *I WILL give thee a new heart; a new spirit WILL I put within you: I WILL take away the heart of stone; I WILL give you a heart of flesh: I WILL put my Spirit within you, &c.* ten or twelve *I wills*. And this part of the covenant, delivered by Jacob in the text, is like a crowning promise put upon the head of all: *I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.* And what better than this, that God says, *I will?* What he will do, must be.

V. The *fifth* general head proposed, was, To make *application* of the whole in some *inferences*. If it be so, as I have been saying, Hence see,

I. Whence it is that some may seem to be, of all men, the *most miserable*, who are yet, of all men, the *most*

happy; I mean, *believers* in Christ, who are acquainted with Bethel-meetings with God, and to whom God hath spoken favourably and graciously.—They seem to be most miserable, in respect of the dark and dismal nights that may follow upon their sweet intercourse with God; and yet are the most happy persons in the world, in respect of their having God, binding and obliging himself *never to leave them*, till he hath performed all the gracious promises of the covenant to them: *This is the honour of all the saints*; God will not leave them, though they seem to be left by all the world. And God will do what he hath spoken to them of, though clouds and darkness, and mountains of difficulty stand in the way.

2. See whence it is that some may seem to be the most *happy persons* in the world, who are yet the most *miserable*; I mean, *unbelievers*, whether they be profane or professors, that have no acquaintance with God in Christ. They may seem to be the most happy people for a while, in respect they know not what it is to have a dark day, a day of trouble and adversity; they have peace and prosperity in the world: *They are not troubled as other men, neither are they plagued like other men*, Psal. lxxiii. 5. They have no fear either from church or state. They have easy consciences, that can comply with every thing right or wrong, that is imposed upon them, whether by civil or ecclesiastical authority. They can sell truth to buy peace, and so they live at ease; and yet they are the most miserable, because they are left and forsaken of God, and are not the children of the promise, to whom God hath spoken peace; but the heirs of the threatening, against whom God hath denounced judgment, to whom he hath spoken wrath; yea, and *sworn in wrath that they shall not enter into his rest*: for there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. And whatever temptations the people of God may be under to fret or grieve at their prosperity; yet, whenever the believer goes to the *sanctuary*, then will he see their end, and how they are set but in slippery places, and suddenly cast down into destruction.

3. Hence see, that the *ground* of faith stands immutable amidst all changes. The most dark and dismal days cannot hinder the accomplishment of the divine promise; neither need any dark providence, or heavy dispensation, hinder the exercise of faith, and the life of faith in the divine promise. Nay, these cross providences may rather further the life of faith, than hinder it: for faith is never properly exercised, but upon the supposition of dark providences, crossing and seeming to oppose the accomplishing of the promise: because, in such a case, the soul hath nothing to do but to believe; nothing to look to but the promise; nothing to confide in but a promising God, and this is downright and honest believing; like that which our Lord Jesus called the ruler of the synagogue unto, when news came that his child was dead, *Fear not, only believe*, Mark v. 36.; for then it is time for God to shew himself. Faith hath a *But* that can stand out against all the arrows of cross providence that are shot against it; *Thou, O God, shall bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live half their days; BUT I will trust in thee*, Psal. lv. 23. He had been speaking of many hard things in his way, such as his being pained, because of the voice of the enemy, and *the oppression of the wicked*, ver. 3. *How they cast iniquity upon him, and in wrath hated him: yea, but I will trust in thee*. As God will accomplish his promise notwithstanding all the *Buts* that are in the way; so there is ground to trust for faith confidently, because God hath spoken; therefore no matter, though men and devils really, and dark promises seemingly speak to the contrary.

4. Hence see who are the *greatest blessings* to a church or nation. Surely these to whom God hath said, that *he will not leave them*. God hath not altogether left the church or the land where any such are in it: but if they were gone, then God is gone also; and, *Wo to them when I depart from them, saith the Lord*. Some are fond to have God's people persecuted and his saints

banished out of their coasts: they cannot bear their faithfulness and honesty, they are a torment to them; but yet what should become of a church or land, if God's faithful remnant were gone? his presence would go with them, and none would remain behind to whom God hath said, *I will not leave them.* Then would that church be left of God, and wo would be to them. May we not say with the prophet, Isa. i. 9. *Except the Lord had left us a very small remnant, we had been as Sodom, we had been like unto Gomorrah?* Surely when a church begins to cast out the faithful from among them, then they begin to destroy themselves, and to bring down wo upon their own heads.

5. Hence see, where lies the *safety* of God's children, when they are cast out by their friends and brethren, as Jacob was in a manner cast out at all hands; he was the object of his friend Laban's envy, and his brother Esau's spite and rage, which occasioned his being cast out of his Father's family, and the country of his kindred for twenty years. Well, but where was his safety? Why, when all other comforts left him, God said, *I will not leave thee till I have done what I have promised.* God's promise was his inheritance, and God's presence was his guard, amidst all frowning providences; and so it is, and will be, with all the true spiritual seed of Jacob. Whoever leaves them, God will not leave them; whatever men speak reproachfully against them, yet God speaks comfortably to them: yea, and whatever men do against them, God will do for them, and do all that he hath spoken to them of.

6. Hence see the *different state* of the church *visible* from the church *invisible* upon earth; or the difference between the true and faithful children of God, and any particular visible church. Why, all true believers have this promise secured in their persons, that God will never leave them till he hath accomplished all his promises of grace and mercy to them. He hath said, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee;* but it cannot be

said of any particular visible church, that God will never leave them. God hath left many particular churches, and called them, *LO-AMMI*, saying, *Ye are not my people, and I will not be your God*, Hof. i. 9. And how far he may leave the church of Scotland, who can tell? The glory sometimes departs from the *threshold* to the *mountains*; and God seems to be making fearful removes from the present generation.—I would not love to give any just offence; nay, nor to grate the ears of any hearers with reflections upon any that are but poor, mortal, sinful men, like ourselves, subject to the like passions, and clothed with the like infirmities: but I would desire to keep mine eyes on a higher hand than any sinful instruments of the church's misery and confusion. They could do nothing, if God were not provoked by our sins to leave them to themselves, and to their violent measures. *Who gave Jacob to the spoil, and Israel to the robbers? Did not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned?* May we not say of the church of Scotland, *Her rowers have brought her into great waters?* Ezek. xxvii. 26. But it is our sins that have provoked God to leave the rowers and managers, who could do nothing either against the sacred office of ministers, or the Christian rights of people, except it were given from heaven, as Christ said to Pilate, *Thou couldst have power against me, except it were given.* As I love not to offend or grate any, as I said, so I would not be chargeable with sinful silence in such a time, when God seems to be saying, *Cry aloud and spare not; tell the house of Israel their sins.* Wo would be to us, if we should be afraid of man; that shall die; or the son of man, that shall be as grass, Isa. li. 12. May we not consider, as a matter of lamentation, how far God seems to have left the church of Scotland and her judicatories? I shall not assert, at this time, what I shall speak by way of supposition, and leave it to every one to judge, whether it be matter of lamentation before God in case the supposition should be found a truth. And I shall speak in the first person of the plural num-

ber, that I may take in myself as having a hand, as well as others, in provoking the Lord to leave us.

If God hath left us and our judicatories to make *unscriptural* and *unwarrantable acts*, denuding the Lord's people of their just rights and christian priviledges; would it not be lamentable, if he hath left us so far as to make these acts *terms of communion*, so as none shall have communion with us that dare oppose these unwarranted proceedings?—Again, if he hath left us so far as to indulge *Arians* and *Blasphemers*, and deal gently with these that are guilty of foundational errors, and yet to proceed violently and furiously against some of the friends of truth, and to shew hardly so much regard for the supreme authority and dignity of the Son of God, as we shew for the supreme authority and dignity of our erring assemblies; if this were so, would it not be lamentable?—If God hath left us so far as to destroy ourselves by sacrificing a *covenanted reformation*; and together with it, the *sacred office of ministers*, and the *spiritual rights of people*, that would adhere thereto, and unto what we call church authority and good order, which yet is but another name for church tyranny, and dreadful confusion; would not this be very lamentable?—If God hath left us to cast out of our bosom some that are, perhaps, the *friends and favourites of heaven*, and that, because of their faithful testimony against the evils and defections of the day; would not this be lamentable, and evidence that God hath very far left us?—These and many other things I might suppose.

What is the world saying, but that our *rowers have brought us into great waters*? Ezek. xxvii. 26. What is this they are saying of the judicatories of the church of Scotland in our days? Are people saying, that God hath left us and our judicatories, so far as to make *unscriptural* and *unwarrantable acts*, and impose sinful terms of communion? &c. Are they saying, that Bethel is turned to Bethaven? That Philadelphia is turned to Laodicea? It would be good news if there

were no truth in what the world are now saying of us. But if there be any truth in it, then surely God hath left us very far; and who knows how far he may yet remove? Better sword, famine, and pestilence among us, than that God should utterly leave us. But how far soever he may leave a visible church, yet he will never leave his invisible remnant: for to them he hath said, *I will not leave thee, till I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.*

7. Hence see reason to try what *side* you are upon, whether you be a *Jacob* or an *Esau*. They were born of the same mother, and lay in the same womb; but the one was blessed and the other cursed. You may be of the same mother church, yet *born after the flesh, and not after the Spirit*. If you be the true seed of Jacob, then you will know something of a Bethel-interview with God. Hath God ever brought you to a wilderness, and there met with you, and spoke comfortably to you? Have you ever seen the glory of God in Christ as a ladder to heaven, *The way, the truth, and the life*, so as you were made to close with him, and ascend up to God by this ladder? *For, by him we believe in God, who raised him from the dead, and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God.* Have you heard God speaking to you, and communicating his mind, or discovering himself as a promising God in words of grace to your humiliation, sanctification, and consolation? O man, woman, if all places be alike to you, so as you never met with God in a place that might be called BETHEL; and if all words of scripture be alike to you, so as you know no word on which *he hath caused you to hope, you are yet a stranger to Israel*: but if you can point at the place where the Lord God of the Hebrews met with you once a day, so as you can sometimes look back upon it with pleasure, saying, O! I thought it was a BETHEL, *a house of God*; and if you can point at the word with which God opened your heart, as he did the heart of Lydia, and made it the porch both of holiness and

comfort, it is good. Did he make the word to you, as it was to Job, *Better and more precious than your necessary food*; and as it was to Jeremiah, *The joy and rejoicing of your heart*; and as it was to David, *Sweeter than the honey, or the honey comb*, and the very ground on which *he caused you to hope*? and are you from that time to this still *hoping in his word*, when the Lord restores your soul out of its sleepy fit? Why, then, it seems you are a child of promise, to whom God hath said, *I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.*

8. Hence see the duty of all who hear me, both unbelievers and believers.

[1.] Ye that are *unbelievers*, and know not the God of Bethel, but are *strangers to the covenant of promise*, *living without God, and without hope in the world*; *living in the lusts of the flesh*; poor, wretched, worldly creature, drunkard, whoremonger, Sabbath-breaker, or hypocrite, that may be comes to communions, but never had communion with God there, and never came out of Sodom to this day, that was never brought to a wilderness of fear and despair, and then to a Bethel of hope and comfort in God, as a promising God in Christ; I would tell you your duty in two words.

(1.) It is your duty to *consider the dangerous state you are into*. And I must tell you a terrible word for awakening your seared conscience, if God would bless it for that end. As you have been hearing that God is bound by his own *promise*, never to leave his children, till he doth that which he hath spoken to them of in the gospel: so, on the other hand, that same God is bound and obliged, by his *threatening*, if you remain in that state, never to leave contending with you, until he hath done that which he hath spoken of in the law; that is, you are under the *curse of the law*, and God is obliged to curse you. He that is faithful to his promise, and will accomplish it to all that flee in to Christ, is as faithful to his threatening, and will accomplish it to all that remain out of Christ. What a trembling

heart would you have, man, woman, if you were but in Paul's case, when more than forty men bound themselves with an oath, that they would not eat or drink till they had killed him? If so many men were bound under oath to kill and destroy you, I suppose it would take sleep from your eyes, and make you restless how to escape out of their fury; and yet their oath would relate but to a temporal life. But tremble and fear to think, that the great God is bound, by solemn oath, to damn and destroy you to all eternity, if you remain in that Christless state; *He hath sworn in his wrath, that you shall not enter into his rest.* Heb. iii. 11.

(2.) It is your duty to *flee from this wrath to come*, by fleeing to Bethel, to the God of Bethel, to a promising God in Christ. You will never go to heaven, if you go not to Bethel by the way; I mean, if you remain strangers to Christ. Think not these are words of course that we are speaking to you; for, as *knowing the terrors of God, we persuade you*, to flee out of Sodom, and away from the divine wrath: so, I hope, knowing the *comforts of God*, as the God of Bethel, we would persuade you to come and see what is to be seen at Bethel, and to come and hear the voice of a promising God that is to be heard there. *What we have heard and seen, may we not declare unto you*, that there is such a thing as Bethel-interviews with God? And wo to us who are ministers, if we be preaching to you an absolutely unknown God, an unknown Bethel, an unknown Jesus! If we know neither the terrors nor comforts of God at any time, I think we would have no commission to speak any of them to you, my dear friends, whom I never expect to see all again in our present circumstances, till we see Christ coming in the clouds of heaven. In the fear of God, and in the faith of our meeting together before his tribunal, I would tell you, that the great day's meeting we shall have, will be terrible to you; if before you leave this world, you know nothing of a Bethel meeting with God, as a promising God in Christ.

Therefore, let me *exhort* you, in the last day of the feast, and in the prospect of the great day, to come to Christ, in whom *all the promises are Yea and Amen, to the glory of God.* Come to him, by owning that you cannot come of yourself. Come to him by crying to him, that he would draw you. Come to him, by believing that you cannot believe as you should. Come to him, by believing that you are cursed, wretched, and undone without him, and that you should be blessed and happy in him. Come to him by believing that you have no righteousness but guilt, no strength but weakness; and that *in the Lord only you have righteousness and strength.* Come to him, by believing that you have nothing, and that he hath all; and that you can do nothing, and he can do all for you. Come to him, by imploring him to be your *Prophet, Priest, and King; your wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.* Come to him, not upon such and such terms and conditions you are ready to dream you must come up to: but come to him by coming down to his terms; that is, to be willing to be saved by free grace. *Come down, Zaccheus, for this day salvation is come to thy house:* so, say I, come down, sinner, from the tree of legal qualifications, and legal hopes, built upon your own naughty duties. Come down, for you cannot save yourself by all your climbing, nor bring salvation to yourself; but *this day salvation is come to your house:* salvation is come to you because you cannot come to it; salvation is come to your hand; salvation is come to your heart. The Saviour is knocking at the door of your heart, and calling you to come down, and take the free salvation that is come to you; *Whoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely.* It may be this shall be the last communion you shall see in time, and the last communion-offer that ever you shall hear; or, if you be spared in time, it may be the last communion you shall have with peace in the church of Scotland; it may be so, and it may be otherwise; only we had

long twenty years peace, and it is possible the present emergencies in this church may be the beginning of sorrows: but whatever be a coming, as death and judgment is coming upon you speedily, it is safest for you to come to *Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant*; let not the last offer be slighted: Oh! let us not part with one another, till there be good ground to hope, we shall not part with Christ. Alas! I fear before this day eight days, yea, perhaps, *before the cock crow twice*, this offer of Christ will be forgotten, and out of your head. Some pitiful trifle in a world will take all out of your heart; but I here take your conscience to witness, forget as you will, that this offer shall not be altogether in vain, though it should be slighted; for, when the book of conscience shall be opened at the great day, this shall be called to remembrance, that such a day at Abbot's-hall, after a communion there, Christ and salvation, from sin and wrath, came to you to be freely received, and yet you rejected it; and this will contribute to glorify the justice of God in condemning you, and make it evident to all the world, *that he is clear when he judges*.

Wo is me, if there be not so much as a desire kindled in your heart after our glorious Lord! If you think eternal salvation worth your while, O sinner; and this offer of it no contemptible thing, then I may *advise* you to set some little time a-part, after this occasion is over, and betake yourself to some place, whether in the house or the field, where you may have a little retirement from the world, and there cry to God, that he may follow this offer and this occasion, with power upon your heart, for drawing you to the Lord and his way; while you are thus employed, who knows, but before you come from your knees, the place may become a BETHEL, a *house of God*, where you will see and know him as a promising God in Christ Jesus; for, in this way some have had a meeting with him that they will never forget. O! be restless in waiting on him in the use of all appointed

means, till he manifest himself to you savingly; for, when once he doth so, you may be sure he will never leave you, till he hath perfected the good work according to his promise.

[2.] To you that are *believers* in Christ, and know what it is to have some Bethel-interviews with God, either at this occasion, or formerly. Are you in this happy state, and have God for your close companion, who having begun to do you good, *will not leave you, till he hath done all that he hath said to you!* Your duty is both to be *joyful* in your *promising God*, and *fruitful* in the *work of faith*.

(1.) In the faith of this promise, you ought to be *joyful*. Is it nothing to you, that God himself is your everlasting companion, saying, *I will not leave you?* That he is a promising God to you, and hath condescended to speak to you? That he is your agent, to do what he hath spoken? And that he hath bound himself never to *leave you, until he hath done what he hath spoken?* O! whatever dark days may come, it is your duty to be joyful in him: *Though the earth should be removed, and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea: here is a river that makes glad the city of God; that makes glad the children of God: God is in the midst of them; and hath said, I will not leave you.*

OBJECT. *Alas! but may a child of God say, How can I take in this comfort, when I find the Lord hath left me? Though he said once, I will never leave you, yet it may be a delusion, for I feel the contrary in many sad effects of his absence.*

O unbelieving believer, will you, with Thomas, never believe, till you feel? The ground of your faith is God's promise, and not your feeling. But, for satisfying the soul, that may be under a dark cloud of desertion, saying, *The Lord hath forsaken, my God hath forgotten; sin prevails, and God is out of sight; I would have you to remark, That there are tokens of God presence with you, believer, even when you do not observe them, by reason of the clouds that are up-*

on you: For example, whence is it that you are not *swallowed up* like a ship in a whirlpool; and that there is some secret grain of hope in the heart, even when your unbelief is ready to say, *My hope is perished!* Why, the reason is, he hath not altogether left you.—Whence is it that you are like the *burning bush*, all in a flame many times, and yet not consumed; burning, but not burnt; flaming, but not consumed? You do not observe this; yet it is observable, that you are preserved to this day, to this hour, amidst the flames of temptation, and the floods of corruption: Why? the matter is he hath not left you.—Whence is it that you can never give *over duties altogether*: and, however the temper prevail to slacken your hand, yet you cannot for your heart give up with all religious people, and with all religious duties, wherein you think communion with God may be had? Why, the reason of this is, he hath not altogether left you.—Whence is it that you do not *break God's prison*, through utter despondency, and go away, and take your pleasure with the rest of the wicked world? Even when you are in the prison of desertion and unbelief, you dare not think of bidding farewell to God, or departing wickedly from him, or of bidding the Almighty depart from you; nay, is there not something in your heart, even at your worst, that says, O! if he would come! O! when will he come? This says, he hath not altogether left you.—Whence is it that you cannot *agree with sin*? The more it prevails upon you, the more you abhor it, and abhor yourself for it, and dare not give way to it. Doth not this evidence there is some secret power and presence of God with you, and that he hath not yet left you.—Whence is it that when you *stray from your true resting place*, you cannot *rest anywhere else*, and can find no quiet in your mind, till you be back again? Possibly you fall a seeking rest and peace in the creature, in the world, in recreations, and diversions, and perhaps in your duties, and yet there was something in your heart, that said, Oh! it is not here, it is not here; you find vanity written

on all, till you return to your first Husband.—Again, Whence is it, that at your *worst* the least word of news from him concerning his *return*, makes your heart *leap within you for joy*, as the babe in Elizabeth's womb, at the salutation of Mary, while the news of his return, and the hope of his coming again gives you a glad heart? Surely he is not far off; and even when you are most secure and stupid, most dead and dull, there is a secret wish at the bottom of your heart, O for such a day again, wherein the candle of the Lord shined upon me! *O that it were with me as in months past!*—Whence is it, that the *outward shell of ordinances* cannot content your heart, without the *kernel of communion and fellowship with God*? And that the dead letter of the word cannot please you, without the living Spirit accompanying it? Why, he hath not yet left you to be content with any thing without himself.—Whence is it, that the *interest of Christ*, is *your interest*, and that you cannot join with the defections of the day, nor side with the errors of the times, but still desire to be on Christ's side? Why cannot you turn with the tide of the times? Even because the Lord hath not altogether left you.—In a word, whence is it, that the *least discovery* he makes of himself is *joyfully well-come to you*, when he, as it were, but softly knocks, silently tirls at the door of your heart; *My Beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him*? Song v. 4. When he seems to be on his way to you, you are ready to say as Laban to Abraham's servant, Gen. xxiv. 31. *Come in thou blessed of the Lord.*—Well, whence are all these things, but from this, that he is *still present*, though you see him not, and that he hath never altogether left you, but is still remembring his promise, *I will not leave thee*?

(2.) It is your duty to be *fruitful in the work of faith*. O believer! give glory to God, by believing that he *will not leave you, till he hath done that which he hath spoken to you of*. Dark and cloudy days, that may follow upon Bethel-interviews cannot hinder

God's doing what he hath spoken; and therefore let it not hinder your believing that he *will do what he hath spoken to you of*. Hath he spoken to you of *pardoning your sins*? And hath he spoken to you of *subduing your corruptions*? Hath he spoken of *supplying all your wants*? Hath he spoken to you of *bearing all your burdens*? Hath he spoken to you of *healing all your diseases*? Hath he spoken to you of your *provision* and *through-bearing in the world*? Hath he spoken to you of your *protection* in time of danger? Hath he spoken to you of *satisfying your desires*? Hath he spoken to you of *guiding you by his counsel, and bringing you to his glory*? Hath he spoken to you of your *trials*, that he *will support and uphold with the right-hand of his righteousness*? Hath he spoken to you of your *seed*, that he *will be your God, and the God of your seed*? Hath he spoken to you of your *death*, that *death shall be swallowed up in victory*? Hath he spoken to you of *eternal life*, that *you shall be for ever with him*? Hath he spoken to you of his *love*, that he *hath loved you with an everlasting love*? Hath he spoken to you of his *Spirit*, that *his Spirit shall be in you as a well of water springing up unto everlasting life*? Hath he spoken to you of his *blessing*, that he *hath blessed you, and ye shall be blessed, and that in blessing he will bless you*? Hath he spoken to you of his *presence*, that he *will never leave you nor forsake you, that he will be with you in trouble*? Hath he spoken to you of his *care* about you, that he *will make all things work together for good*? Hath he spoken to you of his *absence*, that he *will return, that he will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice*? Hath he spoken to you of his *anger*, that *it endureth but a moment, and that with everlasting kindness he will have mercy on you*.—Whatever he hath spoken, O give him the glory of his truth, by believing that whatever he seems to be doing by outward frowning providences, yet he *will never leave you, till he hath done what he hath spoken to you of*. It is your duty to

keep your eye shut upon dark providences, and to keep your eye open upon the clear promise.

Has he said, *he will not leave you, till he hath done what he hath said?* Then wait upon him in the due use and improvement of all means, till he do his work, and do not leave him. Return his promise by your practice, saying, Lord, hast thou said, *I will not leave thee, until I have done what I have spoken?* Behold, thro' grace, I resolve I will not leave thee, until thou hast done what thou hast spoken: *He is a God of judgment, and blessed are all they that wait for him.* Hath he said, and promised to this effect? Then, O put up a favourable construction upon all his frowning dispensations! According to your faith of his promise, and of his favour therein, such will be your faith amidst all afflicting providences. Whatever distress and difficulty you meet with; yet let faith still say, for all this, I hope he will do as he hath spoken: for all this, I will not quit my hold of him, but hope in his word.

O believer! remember that whatever God hath said to thee, he hath said it with a *surely*, as he said to Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 12. *I will SURELY do thee good.* And when Jacob came to a strait, he put God in mind of it, *Thou didst say, I will surely do thee good;* and therefore let your faith be acted with a *surely*, grounded upon the truth and veracity of God, saying with David, Psal. xxiii. 6. *SURELY goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. We live by faith and not by sight;* and therefore, though dark days should come, you ought to believe when you cannot see, *And blessed is she that believed, for there shall be a performance of these things which are told her from the Lord,* Luke i. 45. *The word of the Lord endureth for ever,* Psal. xix. 9.

Let the faith of the promise appear in your sanctification, holiness of heart, speech, and behaviour. *Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness*

*in the fear of God, 2 Cor. vii. 1. Let it be evident to all the world you converse with, that now you are clean through the words that he hath spoken to you. He that hath this faith and hope, purifieth himself; for, faith brings all its purity out of Christ: or, which is all one, out of the promise, which is *Yea and Amen in Christ*. The faith of God's love will work by love to a holy God, and his holy ways: therefore, O believer! let your life be a life of faith; and resolve, through grace, to live and die in the faith of his love, which he himself expresseth in this promise, *I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.**

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